

Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)

The pawpaw is one of the most unusual of trees. This escapee of the Tropics occurs over the eastern half of the U.S. in a variety of forest types. Pawpaws may be found in swamps of Florida, next to a sugar maple in Connecticut, among sweetgums in Missouri, all the way to the pines of East Texas.

Long considered restricted to acid soil, the Texas pawpaw has shown no problems in our area caliche. However, supplemental water is needed in dry summers. Growth is rapid, 2-4' per year. Final height is assumed to be 15-18'. Flowering should occur within the first five years after planting.

The tree is very tropical in appearance. The large leaves turn sulfur yellow in the fall. The flowers are fairly showy, 1-2" across with purplish petals. The fruit is banana-like, 2-6" long and 1-2" thick. The fruit is quite tasty, custard-like, very similar to a ripe persimmon.

Two (or more) trees are needed for pollination. Hand pollination ensures fruit production - fertilizer high in phosphorus should make more and larger fruit. The pawpaw is one of few native trees that bears a truly tasty fruit. Pawpaw fruit has been shown to contain anti-cancer compounds.

We have one other species in the genus - *A. parviflora*. It is an uncommon/rare bush in central to southeast Texas.

Deer resistance is unknown, but the bark is known to contain many bitter compounds.